

Message Text

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51

ACTION NEA-16

INFO OCT-01 EUR-25 ISO-00 OMB-01 SIL-01 LAB-06 AID-20

CIAE-00 COME-00 DODE-00 DOTE-00 EB-11 FMC-04 INR-11

NSAE-00 RSC-01 CG-00 COA-02 DLOS-07 SWF-02 PM-07 H-03

L-03 NSC-07 PA-04 PRS-01 SP-03 SS-20 USIA-15 TRSE-00

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R 280646Z SEP 74

FM AMCONSUL KARACHI
TO SECSTATE WASHDC 8396
INFO AMEMBASSY ANKARA
AMCONSUL BOMBAY
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AMCONSUL LAHORE

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E.O. 11652: N/A

TAGS: ETRN, ELAB, PK

SUBJECT: KARACHI PORT STRIKE COLLAPSES

REF: A) KARACHI 1842; B) KARACHI 1894

ANKARA FOR RLO

SUMMARY: UNDER MANAGEMENT AND GOVERNMENT PRESSURE, THE STRIKE OF SOME KARACHI PORT EMPLOYEES APPEARS TO HAVE COLLAPSED. THE PORT IS IN FULL OPERATION. ALL THAT REMAINS IS TO FIND A FACE-SAVING FORMULA FORMALLY TO END THE STRIKE. IMMEDIATE POLITICAL REPERCUSSIONS WERE FEW; OVER THE LONGER TERM, PRIME MINISTER BHUTTO MAY FACE THE LOSS OF SOME KARACHI LOWER-MIDDLE-CLASS/LABOR SUPPORT. END SUMMARY.

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1. THE STRIKE OF CLERICAL AND SKILLED EMPLOYEES AGAINST THE

PUBLIC SECTOR KARACHI PORT TRUST (KPT), CALLED SEPTEMBER 10 BY THEIR UNION, THE ORGANIZATION OF KPT WORKERS (OKPTW), HAS EFFECTIVELY ENDED. THE UNSKILLED STEVEDORES NEVER JOINED IN. ACCORDING TO THE KPT MANAGEMENT, WHOSE ASSERTIONS APPEAR CORROBORATED BY THE VISIBLE ACTIVITY IN THE PORT, 10,343 WORKERS --THE NORMAL COMPLEMENT -- REPORTED FOR DUTY SEPTEMBER 27. THE FIGURES OF SHIPS AND CARGOES LOADED/UNLOADED APPEAR AVERAGE FOR THIS SEASON. KPT HAS ANNOUNCED THAT THE ILLEGAL STRIKE HAS "VIRTUALLY ENDED".

2. THE KPT OBTAINED THE FULL SUPPORT OF THE GOP FOR ITS POSITION, WHICH WAS THAT THE UNRESOLVED ISSUES BETWEEN THE KPT AND THE OKPTW SHOULD BE ADJUDICATED BY THE NATIONAL INDUSTRIAL RELATIONS COMMISSION (NIRC). (THE NIRC HAD DECLARED THE STRIKE ILLEGAL BEFORE IT BEGAN IN VIEW OF THE REFUSAL OF THE OKPTW TO ATTEND NIRC HEARINGS.) CRANE OPERATORS FROM THE KARACHI SHIPYARDS AND MILITARY PERSONNEL WERE CALLED IN. SEVERAL HUNDRED MILITANT UNION MEMBERS WERE ARRESTED UNDER THE DEFENSE OF PAKISTAN RULES (DPR). A SUCCESSION OF MINISTERS APPEALED TO STRIKERS TO RETURN TO WORK, SAID THE STATE WOULD NOT SUBMIT TO "BLACKMAIL", AND IMPUGNED THE STRIKE AS "POLITICAL" AND "ANTI-NATIONAL". (ONE JAMAAT-I-ISLAMI LEADER VERBALLY SUPPORTED THE STRIKERS.) FEDERAL LABOR MINISTER HANIF PERSUADED THE KPT TO EXTEND FROM SEPTEMBER 16 TO 23 THE DATE AFTER WHICH STRIKING WORKERS MIGHT FACE DISMISSAL. NEARLY ALL WERE BACK AT WORK BY THE LATTER DATE. THE NATIONAL ONE-DAY TOKEN SYMPATHY STRIKE SCHEDULED BY THE PAKISTAN NATIONAL FEDERATION OF TRADE UNIONS (PNFTU) FOR SEPTEMBER 23 WAS CALLED OFF ON THE WEAK GROUND THAT ELECTRIC POWER SUPPLIES TO ALL KARACHI INDUSTRIES WERE HALTED DUE TO MECHANICAL FAILURE THAT DAY.

3. THE ISSUES RAISED BY THE STRIKE HAVE NOT BEEN SETTLED. THE OKPTW HAS CHALLENGED THE LEGAL AUTHORITY OF THE NIRC TO ADJUDICATE INDUSTRIAL DISPUTES. THE NIRC, NOW SITTING IN ISLAMABAD, HAS INDICATED IT WILL ANNOUNCE AN EXPARTE DECISION SOON. ON THE MORE PRACTICAL LEVEL, BOTH THE UNION AND MANAGEMENT ARE REPORTEDLY LOOKING FOR A FACE-SAVING FORMULA WHICH WILL ENABLE THE GOP TO RELEASE THOSE JAILED UNDER DPR AND THE OKPTW TO CLAIM SOME CONCESSIONS, FOLLOWING WHICH IT WOULD FORMALLY RETRACT ITS STRIKE CALL.

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4. EXCEPT FOR THE FEW VERBAL EFFORTS OF THE JAMAAT-I-ISLAMI, THERE WAS LITTLE EVIDENCE OF OVERT POLITICAL MANEUVERING TO MAKE POLITICAL CAPITAL OUT OF THE STRIKE. SOME PATHAN "SPOKESMEN", CLAIMING TO REPRESENT STEVEDORES, EVEN ISSUED WHAT SOUNDED LIKE GOP-INSPIRED STATEMENTS CALLING ON THEM TO SUPPORT THE KPT. OVER THE LONGER RUN, PRIME MINISTER BHUTTO AND HIS PPP MAY BE LOSING SOME OF THE KARACHI LOWER-MIDDLE-CLASS AND LABOR SUPPORT THEY RECEIVED IN THE 1970 ELECTIONS. THE KPT STRIKE, ALONG WITH

LITTLE-PUBLICIZED BUT CONTINUING DISTURBANCES IN LOCAL TEXTILE MILLS, INDICATES THAT THE LOWER CLASSES ARE FEELING THE PINCH OF INFLATION DESPITE GOP EFFORTS TO RAISE MINIMUM WAGES. THE VERBAL PRO-LABOR STANCE OF THE GOP COMBINED WITH ITS STRONG EFFORTS TO MAINTAIN PRODUCTION REGARDLESS PRESUMABLY DO NOT GO DOWN WELL WITH ORGANIZED LABOR. WHILE THE LABOR VOTE IS FAR FROM CRUCIAL, EVEN IN KARACHI, IT SEEMS PROBABLE THAT PPP LABOR SUPPORT IS EBBING, AT LEAST FOR NOW.
PINCH

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